THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Government has laid down Route Dispersal Guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country including North-Eastern region. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability. As such, the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of Route Dispersal Guidelines. Further, it is reiterated that no airlines has requested Airports Authority of India (AAI) for operation of scheduled flight through Kanpur Airport.

Aviation Disaster near Mumbai

436. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a major aviation disaster involving three scheduled passenger airlines was averted 100 nautical miles north east of Mumbai on the night of September 23, 2004;

(b) whether it is also a fact that all the three planes were one above the other and appeared as as single radar position symbol on the radar screen;

(c) if so, whether any enquiry has been ordered in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (d) The matter is under investigation of Director General of Civil Aviation.

Revision of Air Fare

437. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:
SHRI MURLI DEORA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether airlines in India have decided to increase air fares and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the air fares in India are three times more than elsewhere in the world and if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Air Turbine Fuel is more expensive here as 80 per cent excise tax coupled with state sales tax ranging from 4 per cent to 9 per cent is imposed on it and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government propose to look into the matter and bring parity in fares with airlines of other countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a), (b) and (d) Government does not regulate the air fares and airlines are free to determine the same in accordance with their commercial judgement and market forces.

(c) The prices of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) before sales tax in India is higher by 25 to 35% compared to the average international prices. The taxation structure on ATF uplifted for domestic operation is 8% excise duty plus Sales Tax levied by State Governments ranging from 4% to 36%, average rate being 25% at present.

Swagat Seva at International Airports

438. SHRI DATTA MEGHE:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the customer-friendly "Swagat Seva" service which would provide hassle-free transit to passengers at international airports;

(b) whether such a service is also available in other countries, and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a payment-based service and if so, the cost thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) 'Swagat Seva' planned by Airport Authority of India (AAI) at Indian airports shall render services for providing assistance to passengers in clearing airport formalities, escorting to the check-in and immigration counters, porterage services to the unaccompanied minors, elderly, sick and physically challenged passengers; hiring a car, taxi, hotel booking, arranging tickets, transportation from aircraft to the terminal building; catering services, arranging conference room, services of business center and reservations and purchase of tickets etc.

(b) A specialized passenger handling services is in operation at international airports abroad. At Dubai International Airport, such service has been launched in the name of 'MARHABA-WELCOME' to offer friendly and efficient service at all stages of the Meet & Greet process.